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Protection of Global Climate for Present and Future Generations of Humankind

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Scientific evidence shows that Earth's climate is changing rapidly (Rood). This is a serious problem worldwide because it affects everything from natural disasters and sea level rise to economic growth and agriculture. For example, sea levels are expected to rise between seven and twenty inches by the end of the century (“Global”), and for every degree Celsius that the Earth warms, corn yields will go down an average of 7.4 percent (Hasemyer). Climate change is especially dangerous to countries at high latitudes because of Arctic ice sheets melting. Canada is located at a high latitude, between 42 and 64 degrees north in North America. The population of Canada is 36.6 million people, (“UN”) its Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.926 (“Human”). Over the last 65 years, the average annual temperature in Canada has warmed by 1.6 °C, a higher rate of warming than in most other regions of the world (“Climate Change”). In addition, Canada has eight of its ten provinces bordering oceans, which makes it vulnerable to climate-caused ocean changes. Therefore, Canada has worked hard to become a world leader when it comes to climate change. "We'll demonstrate that we are serious about climate change,” stated Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in 2015 (Cullen).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals the UN made to end poverty, improve health and education, reduce inequality, and combat

climate change ("Sustainable"). Two of these SDGs are directly related to climate change, SDG 13 and 7. SDG 13 is intended to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and SDG 7 is meant to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. International action started in 1988. The UN passed a General Assembly Resolution called Protection of Global Climate for Present and Future Generations of Mankind ("United"). Also in 1988, an IGO called the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established, it works to provide governments with accurate information on climate change, its impacts, and future options to lessen risks and impacts ("The Intergovernmental"). The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was established in 1992 as an entity of the UN. The UNFCCC is tasked with responding to the global issue of climate change and is working with countries across the globe with programs like the momentum of change. The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997 as an international treaty aimed to reduce the gases that contribute to climate change ("Britannica"). In December 2015, the Paris Agreement was created by the UNFCCC, with a long-term goal of limiting the global average temperature increase to below 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels. As of 2018, Canada and 195 other countries have signed the Paris Agreement. Global average temperatures have already increased 0.74°C in the last 100 years ("Down"). The primary greenhouse gas (GHG) humans cause contributing to climate change is carbon dioxide (CO_2), which has increased in atmospheric concentration from 320 to over 400 parts per million in the last 50 years. Although the global community has accomplished a lot of work toward

increasing awareness of and restricting the effects of climate change, clearly more action is needed.

Over the last three decades, Canada's position on international climate agreements and do domestic policy have varied greatly. During the 1990s, Canada was a big supporter of international treaties on climate change and signed the Kyoto Protocol. Canada committed to a legally binding GHG emissions-reduction of six percent below the 1990 levels to be achieved by 2012. However, in 2006 when Prime Minister Stephen Harper, a conservative, took office, Canada withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol and other active environmental multilateralism. During these years, some NGOs saw Canada as “a spoiler on climate change.” Justin Trudeau, a Liberal Prime Minister, was elected in 2015. Trudeau declared Canada was “back” and “here to help” and in 2016 signed the Paris Agreement, stating, "Today, with my signature, I give you our word that Canada's efforts will not cease". At this date, the Canadian government committed to reducing GHG emissions by 30 percent from 2005 levels by 2030 (Fitz).

On a global scale, Canada believes there needs to be an intergovernmental carbon emission pricing plan. Although the Paris Agreement was a step in the right direction, Canada strongly suggests a more strict program. From Canada’s past experience, a carbon tax can be an effective method but must be designed carefully. For example, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau implemented a program that let each province set up its own system, but they had to create a cost for carbon emissions (Austen). He set the initial price at at least 20 Canadian dollars per metric, ton rising to $50 by 2022. British Columbia was the first

province to use a carbon tax, starting in 2008, and it was well designed and politically successful. Since then, they have seen their provincial GDP grow by more than 17%, while their net GHG emissions declined by 4.7% ("Climate Planning"). What made it a political success was that the profits from the tax credit implementation funded new technologies and programs to curb emissions. Recently however, several provinces are resisting Trudeau's program because they believe it creates unnecessary expenses for individuals. To address the criticism, the government will collect most of the carbon costs from industry and give back some to individuals (Austen). Based on this experience, Canada would be in favor of a resolution with more specificity than the Paris Agreement. Canada believes the resolution should implement a carbon tax that hits all the points that succeeds politically, reduces emissions, and grows the economy.

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